

The Character and Function of a Pioneer Elite: Rural California 1848–1880

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The history of the United States has been described again and again as the history of change, motion and instability. From Tocqueville to Turner, from Bancroft to Billington, from Berthoff to Thernstrom, the accent has been laid on the dynamic – whether it be democratisation, westward expansion, immigration, internal migration or “Americanisation.” It would appear almost incontrovertible that by 1900 the American people were unsettled, in search of order, pressured by the “M Factor,” responding unhappily to industrialism. Yet a number of questions may be asked: where, leaving aside the American Civil War as a very special case, is the evidence of large-scale dissatisfaction with and rebellion against the status quo; where is the evidence that, as the nation expanded west and its institutions extended over ever wider territories, they weakened and fell into disrepute; why did the United States succeed in reaching the Pacific in one piece rather than as several republics, as some of the Founding Fathers feared? One answer might be that the American people formed a consensus after all, but that is not the argument here. It is not necessary to involve the whole American people in an explanation of continuities, for the purpose here is to show how conservative, stabilising cultural control was in one case successfully provided by the few and not the many.¹

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¹ Two articles introduce the reader to some of these themes. Richard S. Alcorn, “Leadership and Stability in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America: A Case Study of an Illinois Town,” *Journal of American History*, 51 (1976), 685–702, comes to conclusions that parallel those of the present study. B. W. Collins, “Community and Consensus in Ante-Bellum America,” *The Historical Journal*, 19 (1976), 635–63,

Evidence for this comes from rural California in the thirty years after the Gold Rush. California in this period might have shown a propensity to repel US norms. It was after all far from the cultural and political heartland of the nation on the east coast; it underwent very rapid settlement over a very short period; its major city, San Francisco, has been described as "instant" and peculiar, unlike the urban societies of the east; California had a large Chinese element, unknown in such proportions elsewhere; its land monopoly was seen as particularly excessive and un-Jeffersonian; its native-born whites were in a minority; it had a white non-Anglo-Saxon past and the remnants of a white non-Anglo-Saxon ruling class. But by 1880 the state had come to take up a regular position within the American commonwealth and Californian society was largely indistinguishable from societies further east.

I

Broadly speaking California was entered and then settled by two types of immigrant after 1848. The first type had the following characteristics: control of more capital than their fellows, possession of higher occupational status, income and skill; commitment to the long-term future of their new community; an understanding of what gave them their position in society; and a compulsion to set up and maintain those institutions that would continue and strengthen their control over the distribution of resources. They comprised the major property-holders in their area, the owners of the larger and more fertile tracts of land, the owners of the stores and manufactories with the larger turnovers and numbers of customers, the controllers of the streams of credit necessary to water future economic activity, and their allies, the professionals who purveyed the ideology that supported their shared way of life, the editors and publishers, the lawyers and teachers, and the clergy. These men were the elite of their society and they set the pattern to which the others had to conform. The second type at its extreme was rootless and unskilled, under-educated and incoherent about its goals, manipulated by the minority, sometimes the victim of undisguised prejudice, sometimes of more subtle forms of discrimination. The aims of the first group did not go unchallenged by the second: there were differing views on California, as no less a figure than Henry George shows, but the critics were unable to change the character of its society. They were less powerful than their opponents, those who benefited from continuity not change.

finds division and anxiety rather than stability and consensus, but is not concerned with the mechanisms of social or cultural control. Alcorn's article, footnotes two and three, contains valuable bibliographical information.

The purpose of this study is to look at the social structure of rural California, that is California outside San Francisco, about the year 1880 with a view to assessing how cultural control and continuity were established and maintained by an elite during the expansion of nineteenth century America. It will examine the careers of 9,200 persons, very largely male, who dominated rural California in the period. Evidence is drawn from thirty-eight county histories, published between 1878 and 1885, covering forty-four of California's fifty-two rural counties.² These give information on the state's pioneer elite, the body that ensured the cultural patterns of the future through its early decisions. The histories do not contain the lives of all the important settlers of a county, principally because they were compiled by the subscription method, so that interested parties paid to have their biographies inserted.

² The following county histories were used in preparation of this article (short title with publisher): *History of Alameda County* (Oakland: M. W. Wood, 1883); *History of Amador County* (Oakland: Thompson and West, 1881); *History of Butte County* (2 vols. in one, San Francisco: H. L. Wells, 1882); *Calaveras County Illustrated and Described* (Oakland: W. W. Elliott, 1885); *Colusa County* (San Francisco: Elliott and Moore, 1880); *History of Contra Costa County* (San Francisco: W. A. Slocum, 1882); *Historical Souvenir of El Dorado County* (Oakland: Paoli Sioli, 1883); *History of Fresno County* (San Francisco: W. W. Elliott and Co., 1882); *History of Kern County* (San Francisco: W. W. Elliott and Co., 1883); *History of Los Angeles County* (Oakland: Thompson and West, 1880); *History of Marin County* (San Francisco: Alley, Bowen and Co., 1880); *History of Mendocino County* (San Francisco: Alley, Bowen and Co., 1880); *History of Merced County* (San Francisco: Elliott and Moore, 1881); *History of Monterey County* (San Francisco: Elliott and Moore, 1881); *History of Napa and Lake Counties* (San Francisco: Slocum, Bowen and Co., 1881); *History of Nevada County* (Oakland: Thompson and West, 1880); *History of Placer County* (Oakland: Thompson and West, 1882); *Illustrated History of Plumas, Lassen and Sierra Counties* (San Francisco: Fariss and Smith, 1882); *History of Sacramento County* (Oakland: Thompson and West, 1880); *History of San Bernardino County* (San Francisco: W. W. Elliott, 1883); *History of San Joaquin County* (Oakland: Thompson and West, 1879); *History of San Luis Obispo County* (Oakland: Thompson and West, 1883); *History of San Mateo County* (San Francisco: B. F. Alley, 1883); *History of Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties* (Oakland: Thompson and West, 1883); *History of Santa Clara County* (San Francisco: Alley, Bowen and Co., 1881); *Illustrations of Santa Cruz County* (San Francisco: W. W. Elliott, 1879); *Shasta County* (Oakland: W. W. Elliott, 1885); *History of Siskiyou County* (Oakland: D. J. Stewart and Co., 1881); *History of Solano County* (San Francisco: Wood, Alley and Co., 1879); *History of Sonoma County* (San Francisco: Alley, Bowen and Co., 1880); *History of Stanislaus County* (San Francisco: Elliott and Moore, 1881); *History of Sutter County* (Oakland: Thompson and West, 1879); *Tehama County* (San Francisco: Elliott and Moore, 1880); *History of Tulare County* (San Francisco: W. W. Elliott and Co., 1883); *History of Tuolumne County* (San Francisco: B. F. Alley, 1882); *Illustrated Atlas and History of Yolo County* (San Francisco: De Pue and Co., 1879); *History of Yuba County* (Oakland: Thompson and West, 1879).

Yet despite this drawback, close study reveals a wealth of detail about the lives of these pioneers. It is unknown precisely how much an entry cost. The modern editor of a reprint of one of the histories has estimated that subscribers paid eight cents a word; another editor has speculated that fifty dollars was paid for an entry; a third has stated more positively that each subscriber paid twenty-five dollars, or sixty dollars if the residence was illustrated as well.³ The entry fee, however, ensured that those subject to this form of vanity had to have above average means. The labourer earning one dollar twenty-five cents a day was not a likely subscriber.

From this other things followed. Although the state's population in 1880 was almost nine percent Asiatic, only one Chinese entry occurs. Blacks, too, are conspicuous by their absence. There are 120 female subscribers but the majority are widows holding inherited property. The pioneer elite was very largely male and almost exclusively white. This is its first resemblance to eastern elites.

The pioneer elite was also of high occupational status. Very few claimed what are usually classified as unskilled occupations: only four labourers are to be found. Although it is difficult to classify occupations by status when income is unknown, Table A puts occupations into seven categories. The first comprises those who appeared to be self-employed on the land. Many may have been mortgaged and some would have rented their land even though they may have spoken of their "place" as their own. This category does not include farm labourers. The second and third categories comprise, generally speaking, those in trade and manufacturing who were not Professionals. The White-collar I group consists of those who were self-employed, and the White-collar II group of those who worked for others. The Professional, Skilled and Semi-skilled groups are as usually defined, though the very few Unskilled have been classed with the Semi-skilled. Miners have been deliberately classed separately since few were labourers working for absentee owners while many were land-owners and holders of extensive mining claims. Many had sufficient means to support themselves in some comfort and had acquired skill and experience. They were almost exclusively gold-miners although a few were interested in coal.

Table A shows that close to ninety-five percent of the elite of rural California was White-collar. White-collar drives and values were conservative and traditional and being legitimised by the social success of the elite and would

³ See *History of San Bernardino and San Diego Counties* (1883; rept. Riverside, Ca.: Riverside Museum Press, 1965), Introduction; *History of San Luis Obispo County* (1883; rept. Berkeley: Howell-North, 1966), p. D; Oscar Lewis, *Mug Books: A Dissertation Concerning the Origins of A Certain Familiar Division of Americana* (New York: Colophon, 1934), pp. 3-5.

TABLE A. *Occupational Breakdown of Pioneer Elite by Number and Percent, Rural California, 1880.*

	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
1. Agriculturally self-employed	4,862	54.3
2. White-collar I	2,163	24.2
3. White-collar II	314	3.5
4. Professional	915	10.2
5. Skilled	340	3.8
6. Semi-skilled	99	1.1
7. Miners	259	2.9
Total	8,952	100.0

Excludes those with no apparent occupation: males 232, females 24.

Labourers included with Semi-skilled.

Source: see footnote 2.

tend to prevail as long as the elite remained in power. The elite was under no pressure to adopt new values or relationships, for to have done so might have weakened its social position. Its members therefore maintained traditional relationships thereby acting as all-important agents of continuity.

They were able to do this partly since so many of them were native-born. Seven out of ten of the elite were born in the United States, while the foreign-born came almost entirely from four communities, the British North American, the English, the Irish and the German.⁴ The potential cultural distance between the two groups was diminished by two factors. First, the vast majority of immigrants had spent an important formative period in the eastern states. Second, the values surrounding the acquisition and defence of property were not specifically American. The pioneer elite were by definition holders of property in the main, irrespective of origin, and therefore engaged in a common cause. The English and British North Americans, here very largely English-speaking, were also sharers of a single cultural heritage, while many leading Irish immigrants had acquired the values of property acquisition in the urban areas of their old society.⁵ There is no sign that the rural Californian elite was divided on ethnic lines.

Since property and power are usually accumulated over time, it is not surprising that the pioneer elite were considerably older on average than the total adult population of rural California. The statewide median age of the

⁴ The number, in parenthesis, and percentage of the pioneer elite by major group was: Native-born (6,525) 70.6; British North American-born (369) 4.0; English-born (438) 4.7; Irish-born (474) 5.1; German-born (719) 7.7.

⁵ See Patrick J. Blessing, *West Among Strangers: Irish Migration to California, 1850-80* (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Los Angeles, 1977), *passim*.

total population over seventeen years of age was thirty-five, but the subscribers to the county histories were nearer fifty than forty. Indeed the Irish-born elite were mostly over fifty, their median decade of birth being in the 1820s.⁶ Two general trends could have brought about this distinctive age structure. First, the elite would have received successive reinforcements from men in their prime of life, rather than from men at the beginning of their adult careers. Only a few among the rural elite over fifty years of age had very lately settled in California. But second and more importantly, the great majority of the pioneer elite had been in the state for many years and had aged with their communities. In 1850 California had been known throughout the world as a place for the young and energetic. The population then had been almost entirely young and aspirant. By 1880 it had aged and the young men of 1850 were now in their fifties. One reflection of this was the fall in the level of opportunity particularly recognised in the 1870s. This decline was in turn connected to the way in which the pioneer elite had strengthened its hold on the fruits of economic development as the years had gone by. The aging elite community represented a continually stable core group in society, one strengthened by the passage of time.

This point can be further demonstrated. Significant evidence for continuity comes from the elite's median date of arrival in state and county. Their careers show the importance of early arrival followed by persistence, a vital element in continuity and control. The information given in the biographies does not say that the subscribers were living at the same addresses around 1880 as they had on their first arrival in the county, but it is significant that the median date of arrival in California lies after 1860 in the case of two counties only, those of Santa Barbara (including Ventura) and Los Angeles. Even here the latest date for arrival in the state is 1863. In general, the pioneer elite were in the state by 1855 and in the 1880 county of residence by 1862-3. Overall, subscribers had spent about seven and a half years in the state before settling in the county in which they still resided around 1880. Thus the pioneer elite of 1880 had been in California society for a quarter of a century and had certainly had time enough to create conditions of stability and continuity. If, as seems most likely, there was great transience in the population of nineteenth century America these figures suggest that not all of it was permanent and not all was of a class doomed to

⁶ 76 percent of the native-born, 81 percent of the German-born, 81 percent of the English-born, 87 percent of the Irish-born and 60 percent of the British North American-born elite were over forty years of age. The British North American population was generally younger than that of the United States of this period. See M. C. Urquhart and K. A. H. Buckley, *Historical Statistics of Canada* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1965), p. 16.

social failure. Some transience was of young males looking for the right place to begin the ascent of the socio-economic ladder and some transience thus ended relatively early. Conversely continuous wandering meant not promotion but disinvestment to the detriment of already achieved results.

Frederick Jackson Turner's famous essay of 1893 quotes approvingly from Peck's *New Guide to the West* (Boston, 1837). Peck's view of the ever-moving pioneer suggested that society was continually upset by migration and that it was a general phenomenon. As Peck put it, "Migration has become a habit in the West. Hundreds of men can be found, not over 50 years of age, who have settled for the fourth, fifth or sixth time on a new spot." Furthermore, Peck and Turner created an image of uniform, continuous movement of the frontier, producing a quasi-geological sequence of successively more complex social zones. It began with the "pioneer," one who only waited to glimpse the smoke from his neighbour's fire before moving on, and continued with the "emigrants," those who

purchase the lands, add field to field, clear out the roads, throw rough bridges over the streams, put up hewn log houses with glass windows and brick or stone chimneys, occasionally plant orchards, build mills, school-houses, court-houses, etc., and exhibit the picture and forms of plain, frugal, civilized life.

The list ended with the third group, the "men of capital and enterprise" to whom "the settler is ready to sell out and take advantage of the rise in property, push farther into the interior and become himself, a man of capital and enterprise in turn."⁷

Whether or not this was the case in Turner's Wisconsin it was certainly not true for the California elite who are evident in all three groups, not merely in the last. Their biographies also suggest that they do not belong in the Turner-Peck picture of continuous resettlement. Among the native-born, thirty-seven percent had made only one move from their birthplace to California, twenty percent had made but two, and eighty-five percent had made fewer than four moves. Only eight percent had made the four or more moves mentioned by Peck and Turner. As the biographies are usually fuller on the pre-California period than they are on that following arrival in the state, it is impossible to gauge how many moves were made *within* the state before final settlement in the locality of the early eighties. Some pioneers, however, did go straight to the county where they were living in 1880, their numbers varying according to the state of the county economy at the time the pioneer was arriving in California. At one extreme, for example, in the northern mining counties of Placer and Yuba, heavily settled in early Gold Rush

⁷ Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1921), pp. 19-21.

days, forty-five and forty-eight percent respectively of the patrons of the county histories reported that they had gone to their county in the same year as they had come to the state. In the central agricultural county of San Joaquin the figure was thirty-three percent. In the south there were variations between Los Angeles County with its urban opportunities attracting forty-five percent of its pioneers immediately and Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties, areas of slow and late growth, to which only twenty-two and eighteen percent, respectively, of pioneers went direct.

As far as the series of moves to California is concerned, the picture is little different for the foreign-born. They needed to make one more move than the native-born to reach the state, but between eight and nine out of every ten of them made three or fewer moves in reaching California.⁸ Native-born and foreign-born patterns here again suggest that success in the westward movement went hand in hand not with a ceaseless search for wealth over the next horizon, but with an early permanent discovery of opportunity in one place, the foundations of a fortune being built on over the years to give the status enjoyed in 1880.

It is not true, however, that the majority of the elite rose from rags to riches after arriving in California. Many came having already achieved a respectable position in the east. A survey of 1,534 elite pioneers in seventeen counties reveals a limited amount of occupational change.⁹ The sample includes 1,501 individuals who in the seventies were employed in White-collar occupations or were farmers owning land. Just over sixty percent had not changed their occupational status by moving west, though they may have altered their income. Thirty-eight percent had crossed the collar line but many were younger sons moving from the temporary and artificial status of farm labourer to farm owner. A significant proportion of the minority had practised their trade in the east and now had their own businesses in California. The pioneer elite was not a fixed, exclusive body and did receive additions from outside itself but in the main it emerged from previous elites further east.

II

If the Californian pattern is not idiosyncratic, the existence of a pioneer elite on the frontier had great consequences for the history of American society

⁸ Percentages by foreign-born group were: German-born, 83; Scottish-born, 83, English-born, 83; British North American-born, 87; Irish-born, 83; Swiss-born, 88; and Welsh-born, 88.

⁹ The 17 counties sampled were Alameda, Amador, Butte, Colusa, Contra Costa, Lake, Lassen, Los Angeles, Marin, Napa, Plumas, Sacramento, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Ventura, Sierra and Sonoma.

during the westward movement. It was the demands and behaviour of this group that went far to structure the fluctuating society around them. Basically they wanted their control over resources defended and institutionalised; in point of fact it proved impossible to prevent this. It was not merely that the pioneer elite arrived early and then tightened their controlling hold over the culture of their new home. It was extremely difficult to challenge the social and cultural role of a group whose very activities in their material forms characterised the progress of an area from wilderness to civilisation, something most men wanted even if the particular outcome of the development was objectionable to some. The primary urge of the pioneer elite was to act to preserve property in the full Lockean sense of life, liberty and estate which, according to the Constitution, was synonymous with the national purpose. It was the concurrence of selfish and national values that was the basis of their cultural control. National and elite values did not differ on the California frontier, even though it was so far from Washington, and there was thus no compulsion to innovate. The reluctance to do so is understandable, for innovation could have been a means toward the weakening of elite control. The elite demanded continuity.

Power lay with property and property led to law. In the midst of the pioneer elite were the purveyors of elite and national ideology and at their centre was the lawyer who, more than anyone else, represented continuity, stability and unchanging culture. Tocqueville noticed the importance of lawyers in the United States at another time and in another place;¹⁰ he would have recognised that they were still playing a vital role on the Californian frontier. The work of Antonio Gramsci has suggested the presence in society of an important group of "hegemonic intellectuals," persons who define and control the ideology of the society in alliance with and on behalf of the ruling group. Gramsci's intellectuals are not those interested in reason and ideas for their own sake, but the "organic intellectuals" who have a defining and defending role to play in relation to all the social arrangements that exist.¹¹ The lawyer on the frontier is the arch-intellectual in this sense, implementing a legal system whose prime function was the defence of the status quo. The lawyer worked through the courts, which were staffed by his fellow professionals and by non-professionals in the elite, and helped the courts control the shape of their common society. California law courts had extremely wide powers, and the extent of judicial responsibility in the all-

¹⁰ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. Phillips Bradley (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945), 2, 283-90.

¹¹ See John M. Cammett, *Antonio Gramsci and the Origins of Italian Communism* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1967), p. 202; A. Pozzolini, *Antonio Gramsci: An Introduction to His Thought* (London: Pluto Press, 1970), pp. 112-3.

important, formative years is best described as semi-legislative. In San Luis Obispo County, within a year of organisation, the Court of Sessions laid down rules for repairing roads, for licensing gambling, for controlling the killing of cattle, for supervising irrigation, for cleansing streets, for holding rodeos and for Indian relations. The men who controlled the courts and the imposition of their powers were clearly central to the community and its shaping. Equally there was little room in which an alternative source of power might attempt to act. In urban areas such as Sacramento, municipal government played a similar role, controlled by similar men, as did the later Boards of Supervisors. As the editor of the San Luis Obispo County history said, these bodies had "extraordinary powers as legislators and directors of the conduct of the people."¹²

The continuity of law and the conservatism of lawyers thus became crucial. The very intimate nature of legal education and training, whereby many lawyers received their ideas and values through working in the offices of established lawyers meant that conservative ideas were easily transferred. California lawyers, by and large, were either trained in eastern law offices, or, in a few cases, learnt their law from easterners in centres like San Francisco. As the case of riparian rights, conspicuous as the exception, shows, they did not feel free to innovate. While it was possible that California with its Hispanic past might have adopted a form of Civil Law, the first legislature quickly decided on the Common Law.¹³ This decision gave the law to eastern lawyers who thereby bound California society tightly into the national system of values here as they had done on other frontiers.¹⁴

This point is particularly borne out in the case of Southern California. Previous to the American conquest, the social structure there had been based on a number of landed families, largely Californio, that is Hispanic and Hispanic-Indian, rather than Anglo-Saxon in origin, and perhaps more

¹² *History of San Luis Obispo County*, pp. 132–33; *History of Santa Barbara County*, pp. 79–80.

¹³ Edwin W. Young, "The Adoption of the Common Law In California," *American Journal of Legal History*, 4 (1960), 355–63. Gordon M. Bakken does try to make a case for an amended common law in the Far West but his argument is a narrow one resting on particular and not basic philosophical changes. See his "English Common Law in the Rocky Mountain West," *Arizona and the West*, 2 (1969), 109–28.

¹⁴ Malcolm J. Rohrbough, *The Trans-Appalachian Frontier: People, Societies, and Institutions 1775–1850* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1978), pp. 49–57; Michael H. Harris, "The Frontier Lawyer's Library: Southern Indiana, 1800–1850, as a Test Case," *American Journal of Legal History*, 16 (1972), 239–51; W. B. Hamilton, "Transmission of English Law to the Frontier of America," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 67 (1968), 243–64; Clarence F. Carter, "The Transit of Law to the Frontier," *Journal of Mississippi History*, 16 (1954), 183–92.

familiar with Justinian than Blackstone. It is therefore remarkable proof of the close connection between control of law and control of society on the frontier that men like Joaquin Carillo or Pablo de la Guerra of Santa Barbara, men of the highest social position, long presided over the courts in the American period though they could not understand the English language. Although they might have modified legal practice through mere unfamiliarity, in fact they relied heavily on men like Charles F. Huse who had graduated from Harvard and who kept them within familiar confines. In any case the pioneer Santa Barbara bar of some forty-eight members had at least twenty-six men educated in eastern law schools, including Harvard, Dartmouth, Columbia, Michigan, Amherst, Georgia and Cornell, while only two had no formal training in the Anglo-American legal system.¹⁵

It is not possible here to trace all the ways, formal and informal, by which the pioneer elite used the law to establish institutions that validated their position and their control. But it is possible to notice the very close overlap between the elite, the lawyers and politicians at the state capital, Sacramento. By itself, such congruence might have little significance but state politics was far from insignificant, as so much electioneering, organizing and voting showed. Men went into politics to preserve their social control and consequently the membership of the legislature reveals which groups had positions to defend.

Table B gives the occupational breakdown of members of selected state administrations and legislatures in the period. It shows that at the very least the pioneer elite shared the occupational status of the formal political rulers. By contrast blue-collar workers played a weak role. They made some mark in the Assembly but even there every legislator from a blue-collar background faced five or six who were not. The lawyers, farmers, proprietors and their professional allies dominated the administrations and legislatures and imposed their values on legislation. When Senator Crosby¹⁶ reported to the first legislature on whether California should adopt the Common or the Civil Law, he remarked that to the Common Law "the world is indebted for whatever it enjoys of free government, of political and religious liberty, of untrammelled legislation, and unbought administration of justice," but what that meant for the transient, the unpropertied, or the dispossessed was spelled out by Section 647 of the Political Code: "Every person [except a

¹⁵ *History of Santa Barbara County*, pp. 144, 166, 442-54. See also *History of San Luis Obispo County*, pp. 285-86.

¹⁶ See "Report of Mr. Crosby on Civil and Common Law," p. 464, in *California, Senate Journal, 1st Session* (San Jose: State Printer, 1849-50). The political code was quoted as a control by *The Amador Sentinel*, 16 June 1880.

Californian Indian] without visible means of living, who has the physical ability to work, and who does not for the space of ten days seek employment, nor labour when employment is offered to him," it said, "[is] punishable by imprisonment in the county jail not exceeding ninety days."

TABLE B. *Occupational Breakdown, Selected State Administrations and Legislatures, 1849-1880.*

	Number	Total	Percent in each group						
		Membership	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
Administrations	12	144	32.6	26.4	6.9	22.9	3.5	6.3	1.4
Senates	16	581	36.1	11.9	14.8	18.6	10.7	6.4	1.5
Assemblies	15	1,175	19.2	9.2	25.5	19.7	15.1	10.6	0.7
Key to Groups:	1. Lawyers	2. Other Professionals	3. Farmers						
	4. Other White-Collar	5. Miners	6. Others	7. Unknown					

Sources: Richard Lambert, *Statistical Chart* . . . 1853 (San Francisco, 1853); William Fassbender *Statistical Chart* . . . Fifth Session (Sacramento, ?1854); Lambert, *Statistical Chart* . . . Sixth Session (Sacramento, 1855); Lambert, *Homographic Chart* . . . Twelfth Session (Sacramento, ?1861); *Homographic Chart* . . . 1862 (n.p., n.d.); C. D. Bonestel, *Homographic Chart* . . . 1863 (Sacramento, ?1863); *Anthropographic Chart* . . . Fifteenth Session (Sacramento, 1863); H. T. Burr, *Chart* . . . Sixteenth Session (Sacramento, 1866); W. A. Ransom, *Anthropographic Chart* . . . Seventeenth Session (Sacramento, 1867); Kean and Dudley, comps., *Legislative Guide* (Sacramento: H. S. Crocker & Co., 1871); William Halley, *Directory, Twenty-first Session* (Sacramento: William Halley, 1875); *Halley's Handbook, Twenty-second Session* (Oakland: William Halley, 1878). See also footnote 17.

There were close similarities between the history of the elite in the politics of the pioneer period and the elite's general history. Two common characteristics stand out: early arrival and persistence.

It is scarcely worth remark that in 1849 the median date of arrival in the state for members of the Administration was 1849, though it is worth comment that even then the median date for Senators (1848) very probably predated that of the population as a whole: at that date the position could scarce be otherwise. In 1860, however, the eleventh Legislature met. The median date of arrival for Officers of State had advanced to 1850; that for the Senate had reached 1849 and that for the Assembly was 1850. This is evidence of the way in which the pioneer elite had fastened onto political office. Nine years later the eighteenth Legislature met. The median date of arrival for the Officers of State had crept to 1850-51, for the Senators to 1850 and for the Assemblymen to 1851. Figures now become available for the State Supreme Court: the justices had arrived in the median case in 1851. Eleven years later in 1880, after a new constitution and a decade of troubles, the twenty-third Legislature convened. The median date of arrival for the Officers of State

had now advanced only to 1854, for Senators and Assemblymen to 1855.¹⁷ Irrespective of party the median date for successful politicians had inched forward but five years over three decades. Undoubtedly the pioneer elite was the power elite in politics. But the pioneer presence was not limited to the Legislature and Administrations. In 1878, after more turmoil than had been seen in the State since the excitements of the Conquests, a constitutional convention met to redraw fundamental social principles. The electorate sent delegates who, in the median case, had arrived in the state in 1854.¹⁸

The debate over whether society altered its forms and ideas as it moved west must take the presence and drives of the pioneer elite into consideration. Nothing short of a revolution would have been sufficient to ensure that the farmers of the Napa Valley, the grain-dealers of Stockton, the lawyers at Sacramento or the editors of rural California newspapers would have felt constrained to embrace change. Their early arrival and persistence, their control of politics and law ensured that their values dominated society and it was their conservatism and planning that ensured that culture would defeat nature and continuity change. The true significance of the American frontier may be that its continuities help explain the cohesion of a nation that in many ways might have been expected to fall victim to conflict and disintegration as it expanded.

¹⁷ Figures for 1849 taken from *The Names of the President and Senators of the First Senate of the State of California* (n.p., n.d.); for 1860 from Richard Lambert, comp., *Homographic Chart... Eleventh Session* (Sacramento: J. Anthony and Co., 1860); for 1869 from W. A. Ransom, *Anthropographic Chart... Eighteenth Session* (Sacramento: Jefferis, ?1869); for 1880 from Hugh J. Mohan et al., *Pen Pictures of Our Representative Men* (Sacramento: H. A. Weaver's Valley Press Printing House, 1880), *passim*.

¹⁸ Data from T. J. Vivian and D. G. Waldron, eds., *Biographical Sketches of the Delegates to the Convention to Frame a New Constitution for the State of California, 1878* (San Francisco: Francis & Valentine, 1878), *passim*.